

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Restored Caravaggio Masterpiece On View May 17

News Release

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One of the Cleveland Museum of Art's greatest paintings re-installed for centennial year

Cleveland, OH (May 9, 2016) After two years, conservation of one of the Cleveland Museum of Art's masterpieces, Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of Saint Andrew*, 1606–7 is complete. This is the first time the painting has been conserved since coming to the museum in 1976. In 2014, extensive treatment began on the work, whose original paint layer was obscured by clouded, cracked varnish and retouching. The cleaning of the painting was the subject of a Conservation in Focus exhibition during the summer of 2014, when a sophisticated paintings conservation lab was constructed in the museum's Julia and Larry Pollack Focus Gallery, where visitors were able to watch the museum's Conservator of Paintings Dean Yoder and ask questions. *The Crucifixion of Saint Andrew* returns on view May 17, 2016, in the Reid Gallery (gallery 217) in time for the museum's centennial summer celebrations. Visitors will be able to fully appreciate the newly conserved Baroque masterpiece, the largest painting by Caravaggio in America.

The painting depicts the martyrdom of Saint Andrew, who was sentenced to death for his missionary activity in Greece. While bound to the cross, he preached for two days to an increasingly sympathetic crowd. Finally pressured to release Andrew, his executioners were paralyzed while trying to untie him. Caravaggio portrays the moment when Andrew's desire to be martyred has been fulfilled. In an unusual interpretation of the subject, Caravaggio presented the event as intimate and private rather than as a gruesome public spectacle.

Caravaggio revolutionized Italian painting and influenced generations of artists with the naturalism of his figures and the powerful manner in which he used light and shadow. As a result of the conservation work, the artist's clarity and depth of tone have returned to the picture. Visitors will see more detail in the restored masterpiece since cracking, discolored varnish and overpaint had obscured the artist's rich color palette and subtle transitions between light and darkness. Another critical aspect of the conservation was the complete removal of older residues of an oil-containing varnish, which prevented penetration of the varnish into the paint layer. The new varnish provides a rich saturation,

revealing Caravaggio's nuanced color blending and refined paint application. The dramatic realism and luminosity of the figures in the restored painting will astonish and transfix visitors.

The painting's perimeter is now more visible, since previous restorations covered an inch of each edge with thick, brown paint, which has been removed. Beneath this artificial brown border were islands of original paint that enabled Yoder to reconstruct the edges, resulting in a more spacious picture plane. The work has been placed in a new, historically sensitive frame that allows more of the previously hidden edges to be revealed, providing more space around the figures.

During conservation, Yoder discovered numerous incisions and other marks that likely functioned as a form of under drawing, helping position figures and define contours. These shed light on Caravaggio's notoriously mysterious working process. Preliminary scientific analysis has revealed that in The

Crucifixion of Saint Andrew, Caravaggio used two pigmented preparatory ground layers, with one composed of an oil binder and the other a water-based glue, making the painting vulnerable to changes in humidity.

Centennial Celebration

One hundred years ago the Cleveland Museum of Art opened its doors to the public. In 2016 the museum invites all audiences to celebrate its 100th anniversary, honoring the past and looking ahead to the future. Program highlights include special centennial exhibitions representing the creative genius of four continents, spanning ancient to contemporary art, as well as the presentation of extraordinary individual works of art on loan from top-tier institutions all over the world, and once-in-a-lifetime events and community programs.

For more information about centennial year events, visit clevelandart.org/centennial.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Magazine Article: Caravaggio in Focus [2]

Press Announcements ^[3]

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